

Paul Calls for Local Accountability in Homeland Security Bill *14th District Needs Strong Coast Guard, Customs Service, FEMA, and INS*

Washington, DC- Congressman Ron Paul today voted for several amendments to a homeland security bill that would maintain the strength and independence of federal agencies that are vitally important to the 14th congressional district in Texas. Paul believes some agencies would suffer from neglect and increased bureaucratic inefficiency if they are transferred into the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In particular, Paul wants the Coast Guard, Customs Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to remain independent and directly responsible to the local communities they serve.

"I believe the nation needs a strong, independent Coast Guard," Paul stated. "So does Congressman Don Young, who chairs the Transportation committee. He expressed serious reservations about shifting the Coast Guard into DHS, and we should recognize his expertise on coastal security issues. The Coast Guard and its mission are very important to the Texas Gulf coast, and I don't want that mission relegated to the back burner in a huge bureaucracy."

"My district also relies on FEMA for disaster services, especially after recent flooding in Texas," Paul continued. "My office works closely with FEMA to help constituents who suffered flood losses, and we risk seeing FEMA become less responsive as part of DHS. FEMA needs to be a flexible, locally focused, hands-on agency that helps people quickly after a disaster."

"My coastal district also relies heavily on shipping for jobs," Paul stated. "Last year alone, more than one million tons of goods moved through ports in my district. The Customs Service must operate efficiently in these ports, or shipping jobs go elsewhere. I fear the Customs Service will become less focused on the vitality of local ports if its management is further centralized in Washington."

"Finally, my constituents and my staff caseworkers worry that INS red tape will get worse under

DHS," Paul concluded. "In my district close to the Mexican border, the INS directly affects the lives of thousands of people. Immigration matters are best decided by people familiar with border communities, not by DHS officials 1500 miles away in Washington. I've fought to make the INS more responsive and streamlined, and I believe placing the agency in a giant department defeats that goal."